

TASK FORCE LIBERTY 42nd Infantry Division - Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 News

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Rainbow Soldiers wear 'combat patch' after six decades

Task Force Liberty Commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto attended a number of ceremonies over the past week in Iraq, presenting certificates authorizing Soldiers to wear the Rainbow Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for Former Wartime Service, or combat patch, to over 23,000 Soldiers serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 3.

The ceremony marked the first award of the Rainbow Division shoulder insignia as a combat patch since World War II. "You are authorized to wear the shoulder sleeve insignia of your individual regiment and brigade or that of the 42nd Infantry Division as part of Task Force Liberty", said Taluto, adding, "the choice is yours." The diversity of the task force includes Soldiers who wear the shoulder patch of

more than 16 different units.

Taluto went on to share some of the significance and history behind the Rainbow patch with the assembled troops.

The Rainbow patch of the 42nd Infantry Division was the idea of General Douglas MacArthur. While serving as the 42nd Infantry's first Chief of Staff, it was then Colonel MacArthur who described the Division as "stretching across the country like a rainbow" because of the diverse group of hand picked units from over 26 states and the District of Columbia assembled for the first time for World War One. The name stuck and Soldiers all across Long Island, NY were placing unofficial shoulder patches on their uniforms before sailing to France in the fall of 1917.

"The blue of valor, the gold of love and the red of sacrifice. These elements of the Rainbow insignia have not changed in the past 88 years of service. Today these colors and the symbol stand for the same quality of Rainbow Soldiers as back then", said Taluto.

"The valor of Rainbow Soldiers who rushed towards lower Manhattan as the towers fell, the love of family, community and country that inspire our men and women to wear the uniform of our Army and the sacrifice that so many of our Soldiers have

made before and continue to make today in support of the ideals of liberty and freedom," said Taluto.

The patch symbolizes more than just another item to sew on a uniform. It is a reflection on the historical significance of Task Force Liberty and the composite representation through the diverse character of its people. Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel from virtually all 50 states, including Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa working together to advance the cause of freedom.



Task Force Liberty Commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto addresses Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division during a ceremony authorizing Soldiers to wear the Rainbow Combat Patch. (above)

Soldiers of HHC, 42nd Infantry Division stand in formation after receiving certificates authorizing them to wear the Rainbow Combat Patch (right)



NGO Conference Focuses on North Central Iraq Issues



Sheik Kareem Mahani Hashim (left) speaks with Dr. S.B. Ali Sabah Bahaadin Ali (right) at the New Dawn Non-Government Organization Conference, held in Tikrit, Iraq Feb. 27.

FORWARDING OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq – Iraq’s agricultural potential dominated the agenda at the New Dawn Non-Government Organization or NGO Conference, held by Task Force Liberty here Feb. 27.

The conference came less than a month after the first free election in Iraq’s modern history.

Roughly 250 people attended, representing 57 different organizations, including international and Iraqi non-government organizations, Iraqi government agencies and Coalition Forces.

NGOs are organizations, usually non-profit, that work independently of governments to support and assist the citizenry. “They’re a very effective way for Iraqis to get assistance,” said Maj. Rob Smithers, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion and deputy director of the

Civil-Military Coordination Center here. “Our main effort was to design a conference to allow NGOs to interface with each other,” Smithers said.

“Economic development is one of the most important issues for NGOs and Iraqis alike and agriculture is key for this area,” Smithers said. “Whatever the NGOs can bring to help them get back on their feet economically is definitely a priority for this conference.”

One of those NGOs is Global Business Group (GBG), represented at the conference by Andrew Robert Duke, GBG’s executive in charge of new business development. GBG is already importing seed, Duke said, and working with Army Civil Affairs in Taji to identify specific spots – in a sector know troops call IED alley – where farming projects started

by Saddam Hussein can be revitalized.

“This is the fertile crescent, the cradle of civilization. This is the area Alexander the Great conquered so he could have access to the farming economy. It’s obvious that this area is tremendously fertile... you can literally grow almost anything here,” said Duke.

“These are fertile lands that can yield a significant bounty,” said Task Force Liberty Commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto in his opening remarks at the conference. “Iraq’s security has improved,” he said, “and will continue to get better if Iraq’s economy improves. NGOs can be part of this process,” Taluto added.

“We will work with you in any way we can, because the people in North-Central Iraq are ready for your support,” Taluto said.

“Part of the purpose of this conference is for the NGOs to see for themselves exactly what the security situation is here,” Smithers said. “We’ve got representatives of security from each of the local provinces here to discuss how things are in their province, and how we can keep these NGOs safe if they choose to return.”

Maj. Gen. Mohammed Abdullah Hussein, deputy governor of Salah Ad Din Province was on hand at the conference to discuss security and coordinate Iraqi government assistance of NGOs. “Aggressive follow-up by Iraqi security forces after insurgent attacks, and insurgent arrests and deaths has increased security,” said Hussein. This is with the help of Iraqi citizens. “They’re finding out that 90 percent of insurgent attacks kill Iraqis,” Hussein said, adding “so now they cooperate with Iraqi security forces.”

“The biggest improvement is Iraqi security forces themselves,” Taluto said. “They gained great confidence from the election. They know the way. They have great confidence in protecting their own citizens.”

A Truly Grand Opening



BALAD, Iraq – The grand opening of the Tedmur Girls Primary School here Feb. 23 was a scene of celebration as a crowd of Iraqi school children, Iraqi government officials, and Iraqi security forces personnel applauded Coalition Forces soldiers arriving for the ceremony. The school is among the many Iraqi schools renovated or built with the help of Coalition Forces. Photo courtesy of 1st BCT